



reflecting Jesus

BETA

revival springs from repentance **16**

? did you know...

since Bible times, the Holy Spirit has continued to work revival

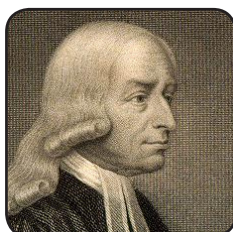
Before electronic microphones were invented, George Whitefield preached the gospel



in the 1700's in the yards of factories, parks, and even a racecourse, to 20,000, 30,000 and 60,000—or more people at a time. One writer noted that as Whitefield preached to miners, “White gutters made by tears plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of the coal pits.” (Düewel, *Revival Fire*, 58.) As thousands listened late into the night, Whitefield describes how “for about an hour and a half there was such weeping, so many falling into deep distress... They were carried off and brought into the house like wounded soldiers taken from a field

of battle. Their agonies and cries were deeply affecting.” Throughout the night people stayed in the fields praying and praising God.

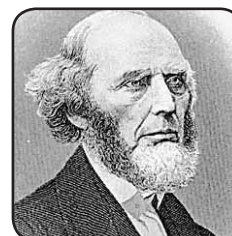
John Wesley, who preached at the same time and became the founder of the Methodists, had similar experiences preaching. Even after being forced to preach outside the church, Wesley spent days there. “By Saturday evening the people were under such conviction for their sins that ‘many in the churchyard congregation dropped down as dead’. Wesley tried to preach, but the cries and praises of those repenting and receiving assurance of forgiveness almost drowned out his voice.” (Ibid 78.)



So powerful was the impact of Whitefield and Wesley,

that historians believe that it was due to the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley that England did not have a revolution, like had been sweeping Europe.

Charles Finney in the 1800's has been described as a man “who probably influenced more conversions and saw the ushering in of more revivals than any other modern man.”



His definition of revival is that “Revival is renewed conviction of sin and repentance” which was the very message

that was the cornerstone of the ministry of John the Baptist who preached “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”, and Jesus, who declared, “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15, NIV)



the facts of his story

A revival is what happens when the Holy Spirit breathes new life into our hearts. Hosea 10:12 gives us an insight into how and why revival occurs. Read the text and then answer the following questions:

1. What is the seed that is being sown? _____
2. What fruit does the seed eventually produce? _____
3. How does the seed get into the ground? _____
4. Who is to break up the ground? _____
5. What waters the seed to make it grow and bear fruit? _____
6. In the Bible, what does "rain" represent"? (You can see a parallel between physical and spiritual rain in Joel 2:23 and 28-29.)

There is a story from the Middle Ages about a young woman who was expelled from heaven and told that she would be readmitted if she would bring back the one gift God valued the most. She brought back drops of blood from a dying patriot. She collected coins given by a destitute widow for the poor. She brought back a remnant of a Bible used by an eminent preacher. She even brought back the dust from the shoes of missionaries who served many years in a distant land. Although she brought back these things and more, she was turned back repeatedly.

One day as she watched a small boy playing by a fountain, she saw a man ride up on horseback and dismount to take a drink. When he saw the boy playing, he thought of his own childhood innocence. But he looked into the water of the fountain and saw a reflection of his hardened face. He was overcome by the sin in his life, and in that moment, he wept tears of repentance. The young woman took one of those tears back to heaven, where she was received with joy.

-- Don McCullough, "Jesus the Judge," Preaching Today, Tape No. 129.



thinking it through

1. Why do you think that the first words that Jesus preaches are about repentance?

2. Why is repentance necessary before the Holy Spirit can change us?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ honestly thinking about sin

No-one likes repentance. No-one likes to think that they were wrong, and that they have to admit it. Repentance is extremely hard, for it is the very opposite of what we naturally want to do.

But unless we confess our sin, and stop doing it, we will not find healing from God. Sins that we do not confess block our connection to God, and this prevents the power to reflect his character from coming into us. That is why David wrote,

If I had not confessed the sin in my heart,
my Lord would not have listened.
Psalm 66:18

But when we are bold enough to believe that God will forgive and restore us, the results are wonderful.

First, there is joy in Heaven. Jesus stated, "I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10)

Second, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)

Third, we receive a new heart. God declared, "Rid yourselves of all the offences you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!" (Ezekiel 18:31-32)

thinking about sin

There may be times when we know we have done something wrong because it's very clear to us. But occasionally there are times when things just aren't going well and we don't know why. Especially at times like these, it is good to spend time alone to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any sin that is blocking our connection with God. It is also helpful to make a habit of asking

God about this at the end of every day. Then we make sure that if there is anything we need to repent of in our lives, we don't allow the problem to continue.

Jeremiah says in Lamentations, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." (Lamentations 3:40) To examine ourselves is to think about ourselves carefully.

using your habit

To think honestly about repentance, you could do the following:

1. Go to a place where you can be by yourself.
2. Thank God for his promise to forgive you so that you can have a new start. (John says that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NIV) This means that if we are truly sorry for going against God's design for our lives, he will forgive us and re-create us like new inside — no matter what we have done.)
3. Pray for the Holy Spirit to show you if there is anything that you need to repent of and change.
4. Use your Journal to make a list of these things. Keep praying and writing until you are sure that there is nothing more for the Holy Spirit wants to show you. Then put a line at the bottom of your list. For example:
 - a) For getting angry at John this morning.
 - b) For looking at things on the web that I shouldn't.
 - c) For not wanting to help those in need.

5. Ask for God's forgiveness and for help to change the way you have been thinking and acting. Look at the first item on your list (Getting angry). Then pray and ask God to forgive you for getting angry and saying unkind words. When you are confident that God has forgiven you (Remember the text in 1 John 1:9), cross out that point. Then pray specifically about number 2 and do the same thing. Pray for everything on your

list individually. When you have reached the line, you know that from this moment on, you are ready to live in harmony with God.

Don't think there is anything you have done that

God cannot forgive. Like David who confessed his sin in Psalm 51 (sin which included adultery and murder), God is eager to restore everyone who asks. You may like to pray through Psalm 51 at the end of your time of confession.



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story” we saw how Hosea 10:12 describes the process of repentance. God longs to see us 2) bear the supernatural fruit of unfailing love, but this fruit can only be reaped from plants that grow from 1) the seeds of righteousness. These seeds of righteousness that bear the fruit of unfailing love—which by definition is the very essence of the character and glory of God—can only grow when 3) the hard ground into which the seed must fall, is broken up. If the ground remains hard, the seeds of righteousness will not fall in. So Hosea says 4) to us, “break up your unploughed ground”. The hard and stony ground must be filled, dug, worked, broken up, ploughed, turned over, for the sole purpose of enabling the rain of 5 & 6) the Holy Spirit to slip into the cracks and soak the ground, bringing the seeds of righteousness to fruitfulness. When our heart is opened through repentance, the rain of the Holy Spirit can enter.

In “thinking it through” you were challenged about repentance in your own life. Repentance is difficult because it is the very opposite of what we want to do, but it will bring us new energy as the Holy Spirit renews our hearts.

In “habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus” we looked at a practical way to repent of sin in our own life. When we learn to regularly examine ourselves before God, we keep our connection to him open at all times.



my time with God

Practice the habit at the end of each day this week. Use the handout to help guide your prayers.



pass it on!

Can you teach someone what Hosea 10:12 means?



extra help

1. Steps to Christ, (first four chapters) by Ellen White
2. How to Experience Revival, by Charles Finney

Preparing The Heart For Revival

*...break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord,
until he comes and showers righteousness on you. (Hosea 10:12)*

The following material has been adapted from the book by Charles G Finney, *How To Experience Revival*. Before you begin this spiritual assessment, think about the text at the top of this page and how it applies to your own life. Then pray for the direction of God's Spirit. Ask Him to give you a true picture of yourself, but also with that, a glorious vision of the sort of person he wants you to become.

Don't hurry through this exercise. Spend time praying over each section asking for guidance and instruction. In the first two columns you will see various areas of our lives that need to be confessed. In the third column there is room for you to confess specific sins in your own life, and to ask for God's forgiveness and healing.

Let's finish with Finney's own words of instruction,

Examine your sins one by one. Go over them carefully as a merchant goes over his books. Each time a sin comes to mind add it to the list. General confessions of sin will never do, your sins were committed one by one, and they should be reviewed and repented of one by one... Get to work with your restitution, now! Go now! Do not put it off... Do not expect God to miraculously break up your fallow ground for you... you must submit your will."

So, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." (Lamentations 3:40)

Things I have not done, that I could have

Lack of thanks to God	Have I been blessed by God, but felt he has not done enough, and so have not thanked him?	
Lack of love for God	Have I loved things more than God?	
Neglecting Bible study	Have I hurried with Bible study, doing it more to "please" God than to learn from him?	
Neglecting prayer	Have I avoided prayer, or prayed only because it "should" be done?	
Times of unbelief	Have I not really believed that God's word or promises are true?	
Poor spiritual attitude	Have I done spiritual things, but my I really didn't want to do them?	
Lack of love and responsibility	Do I really care for the spiritual and eternal welfare of my friends, family?	
Lack of concern for unbelievers	Do I really have compassion for those that don't know Jesus? Do my actions really reflect what I say about how much I care?	
Family responsibilities	Do I fulfil my family responsibilities? What do I do for their spiritual good?	
My own life	How often have I rushed through my own work and left God until it was convenient—or forgotten him completely?	

Lack of self-sacrifice	Do I really sacrifice myself for others? Do I give others only out of what I have extra? What have I given that has meant I have had to go without?	
Something else?		

Things I have done that I should not have

Worldly thinking	Do I consider my money and possessions as my own? Do I work for my own ambition?	
Pride	When have I been acting out of pride? When have I been more concerned with what others think of me than God?	
Envy	When have I been envious of somebody else's money or talents? Have I thought more about their faults rather than their virtues?	
A critical spirit	When have I had a bitter spirit towards others and did not show them love?	
Slander	When have I spoken of other people's faults, real or imagined, for no godly reason?	
A lack of seriousness	When have I been light-hearted with God when I would never dare to be like that with an earthly ruler?	
Lying	When have I deceived someone—by what I said, or not said, by a look, or action?	
Cheating	When have I treated someone in a way I would not like to be treated? (This is cheating people of respect.)	
Hypocrisy	When have I been a hypocrite before God in the way I prayed? When have I prayed for things without sincerity, not even remembering what I said by the end of the prayer?	
Robbing God	When have I taken time for myself when I could have been working for God's kingdom and saving others. When have I withheld my talents, offerings or tithe from God's church?	
A bad temper	Have I been abusive or out of control—to family, friends or church members?	
Something else?		

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:9, NIV)*